



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

EXHIBIT 16
DATE 1/15/2013
HB 31

**Testimony in Opposition to HB 31
House Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee
January 10, 2013
By Wendy Hergenraeder
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Good afternoon Chairman Welborn and members of the committee. On behalf of The Humane Society of the United States, the nation's largest animal protection organization, I respectfully urge your opposition to House Bill 31, which would place a maximum limit on the wolf population at a mere 250 animals.

After being driven to the brink of extinction, wolves in Montana are still recovering. It's estimated that there are only 650 wolves in Montana right now. Lowering the population to a maximum of 250 wolves would be a drastic reduction of 60% of the population – a number too small for a large mammal to maintain necessary genetic diversity. Rushing into aggressive wolf hunting is what placed the wolf in its perilous position in the first place. This would not be a managed hunting season – it would be an extermination that this fragile population may not be able to recover from. 166 wolves were killed in the 2011 hunt, and 140 have been killed during the 2012 hunt so far. H.B. 31 is proposing a harvest of almost three times that amount in future seasons. Furthermore, the appropriate wolf population numbers should not be dictated by the legislature, as it ties the hands of Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks. The agency should have the option to lower the maximum threshold.

Reducing wolf numbers on a broad geographic scale is an ineffective way to deal with problem wolves. Wolves attacking livestock can already be legally killed, and the state should be exploring the use of non-lethal controls, education, and scientific research as a way to prevent future attacks on livestock. Indiscriminate killing of the animals across the state will not reduce conflicts with problem wolves, which instead should be handled on a case-by-case basis.

The wildlife of Montana belongs to all of its citizens, and Montana residents value their wolves. This country has already spent tens of millions of tax dollars to restore healthy wolf populations back from virtual extinction. By employing the same tactics that led to the wolf's population crash in the first place, setting the management level at a maximum of 250 wolves could easily lead to the re-listing of the species, which would reinstate federal control of wolves.

On behalf of our many members and the citizens of our state who value and treasure the wolf, I strongly urge your opposition to House Bill 31. Thank you.

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